

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 030950Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4722

S E C R E T ABU DHABI 2102

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : MASS, TC, US

SUBJECT : UAE DEFENSE FORCE REQUESTS FOR CASH FMS SALES -- TOW

REF: (A) STATE 178831, (B) ABU DHABI 1911

1. FOLLOWING IS REPORT OF DISCUSSION BETWEEN AMBASSADOR AND GEN. KHALDI (DCM AND COLONEL BADIE OF UAEDF ALSO PRESENT) JULY 31 ON QUESTION RENEWED INTEREST OF UAEDF IN ACQUIRING TOW MISSILES UNDER FMS. OTHER SUBJECTS DISCUSSED REPORTED SEPTELS:

2. SAVING THE SUBJECT OF TOW'S TO LAST, AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT WASHINGTON WAS OBVIOUSLY GIVING MATTER SERIOUS THOUGHT AS IT WOULD ANY UAEG REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE. WASHINGTON OFFICIALS CONTINUED, HOWEVER, TO BE TROUBLED BY SAME CONCERNS THAT WE HAD CITED LAST FALL WHEN PREVIOUS REQUEST FOR TOW'S HAD WITH REGRET BEEN TURNED DOWN. AMBASSADOR, NOTING THAT HE HAD PREVIOUSLY COVERED THIS GROUND WITH GEN. KHALDI, MENTIONED VARIOUS POINTS AGAIN. HE SAID USG CLEARLY WANTED HOWEVER, TO CONSIDER ALL ANGLES AND WOULD WELCOME ADDITIONAL COMMENTS GEN. KHALDI MIGHT WISH TO MAKE AS TO WHY HE FELT THIS PARTICULAR WEAPONS SYSTEM WAS SOMETHING WHICH WAS SO NECESSARY FOR UAE AT THIS TIME.

3. GENERAL RESPONDED CALMLY AND AT SOME LENGTH. HE NOTED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD OUR CONCERNS AND OUR RE-

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SPONSIBILITIES BUT FELT WE WERE FAILING ADEQUATELY

TO APPRECIATE UAE SITUATION. UAE WAS NOT TRYING TO ACQUIRE HIGHLY ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY BEYOND ITS NEEDS AND CAPABILITIES. ACCORDING TO KHALDI--ANC HE CITED HIS EXPERIENCE FROM JORDAN--TOW WAS RELATIVELY SIMPLE WEAPON, NOT DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN. HE SAID SOLDIERS COULD BE TRAINED IN ITS USE IN ONE WEEK.

4. AS FOR IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH SALE IN CONTEXT GULF AREA CONCERNS, KHALDI STRESSED THAT TOW WAS DEFENSIVE WEAPON--IT DID NOT POSE THREAT TO ANYONE. THIS WAS WITNESSED BY FACT WE HAD SOLD IT TO BOTH JORDAN AND ISRAEL. HE DID NOT SEE HOW ARMS RACE ARGUMENT AROSE FROM THE ACQUISITION OF SUCH PURELY DEFENSIVE WEAPON. IN THAT CONNECTION, GEN. KHALDI AGAIN REITERATED THAT UAEDF HAD CHOICE IN HIS VIEW OF EITHER ACQUIRING EFFECTIVE, STRICTLY DEFENSIVE ANTI-TANK WEAPON OR OF BUYING TANKS THEMSELVES WHICH, WHILE BEING GOOD ANTI-TANK WEAPON, ALSO HAD OBVIOUS OFFENSIVE CAPABILITIES AS WELL. KHALDI DID NOT FEEL THIS WAS ROUTE TO GO, BUT LACKING WEAPONS SYSTEM SUCH AS TOW WITHIN UAEDF, IT WAS DIFFICULT POSITION TO MAINTAIN.

5. IN THIS CONNECTION, GENERAL DEALT WITH QUESTION OF THREAT OR LACK THEREOF--BOTH IN GENERAL AND IN TERMS OF ARMOR ATTACK IN PARTICULAR. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT UAE HAD NO APPARENT ENEMIES AT PRESENT, BUT HE MAINTAINED THAT ONE CANNOT PREDICT WHEN THAT SITUATION MIGHT CHANGE, WHEN ATTITUDES OR GOVERNMENTS IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES MIGHT BE ALTERED AND THREATEN UAE. IT WAS JOB OF MILITARY IN ANY COUNTRY TO PREPARE FOR THIS. AND ONE COULD CERTAINLY NOT BE ASSURED THERE WOULD BE TIME TO REACT TO SUCH CHANGE AFTER IT OCCURRED. IN SHORT, ENEMIES CAN ARISE AT ANY MINUTE AND WITHIN REASON UAE HAD TO BE PREPARED. AS FOR EXISTENCE OF SPECIFIC ARMOR THREAT, KHALDI SAID THAT IN MODERN WORLD WITH EXTENSIVE ROAD NETWORKS, ARMOR CAN EASILY COME FROM LONG DISTANCES. HE NOTED FOR EXAMPLE THAT BOTH SAUDI ARABIA AND KUWAIT, AND FOR THAT MATTER IRAQ, HAD TANKS WHICH COULD BE HERE IN RELATIVELY SHORT ORDER. AND ONCE HERE UAE OFFERED
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TERRAIN (WITH EXCEPTION OF HEAVY SAND DUNE AREAS IN VICINITY OF LIWA A SOUTHERN ABU DHABI EMIRATE) WHICH WAS EXCELLENT FOR TANKS. THEREFORE, IF YOU ACCEPT ARGUMENT THAT CURRENT CONDITIONS OF FRIENDSHIP CAN CHANGE, THEN POSSIBILITY OF ARMOR THREAT CANNOT BE LIGHTLY DISMISSED.

6. GEN KHALDI WENT ON TO SPEAK OF LIMITED OBJECTIVES

OF UAE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. HE DENIED FOR EXAMPLE THAT THERE WERE ANY PLANS FOR A LARGE EXPANSION OF RAS AL-KHAIMAH FORCE. THERE WOULD BE REORGANIZATION AND ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FORCES CREATED WHERE TODAY THERE WERE NONE RESULTING IN A LARGER MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, BUT NOT SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN FIGHTING MEN. RATHER WHAT HE--AND UAE LEADERSHIP--WAS AFTER WAS TAILORED FORCE, 3 OR 4 BRIGADES PRIMARILY AIMED AT OBJECTIVE OF INTERNAL SECURITY BUT HAVING CAPABILITY TO FACE EXTERNAL THREAT IF IT SHOULD COME. HE MAINTAINED THAT HAVING SUCH A WELL ORGANIZED, APPROPRIATELY ARMED, MODERN FORCE WOULD BE SOURCE OF POLITICAL STRENGTH FOR UAE--NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF KEEPING PEACE BUT IN TERMS OF CREATING STABLE CLIMATE IN WHICH LEADERS COULD DEVOTE THEIR ATTENTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS WITHOUT DISTRACTION.

7. KHALDI CLOSED BY SAYING HE WOULD REPORT OUR CONTINUING RELUCTANCE TO SELL TOW SYSTEM TO SHAIKH KHALIFA. IN THIS CONNECTION HE ASKED IF WASHINGTON WAS GENUINELY INTERESTED IN UAEG RATIONALE OR WHETHER ISSUE SHOULD IN TRUTH BE CONSIDERED CLOSED. AMBASSADOR SAID INTEREST WAS INDEED GENUINE AS WERE OUR CONCERNS WHICH HE HOPED WERE APPRECIATED WITHIN UAE. AMBASSADOR SAID HE THOUGH GEN. KHALDI'S DESCRIPTION OF WHERE TOW FIT IN UAEG MILITARY THINKING WAS USEFUL--IT WAS MORE DETAILED AND COMPREHENSIVE THEN PREVIOUS PRESENTATIONS--AND WOULD BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED IN WASHINGTON. AMBASSADOR PROMISED THAT HE OR DCM WOULD RELAY DECISION AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

8. EMBASSY'S COMMENTS BY SEPTTEL.

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